

U.S. Patent Appln. No. 09/896,774
Response Dated Dec. 20, 2005
Reply to Office Action of Sep. 20, 2005
Docket No. 6169-198

IBM Docket No. BOC9-2000-0062

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

These remarks are made in response to the Office Action of September 20, 2005 (Office Action). As this response is timely filed within the three-month shortened statutory period, no fee is believed due.

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Claims 1-4 and 10-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,262,317 to Sharp, *et al.* (hereinafter Sharp).

Applicants have amended independent Claim 1 to further emphasize certain aspects of Applicants' invention. Applicants respectfully assert that, as amended, independent Claim 1 also overcomes the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Applicants have also amended dependent Claims 13, 15, and 17 to maintain consistency among the various claims. As discussed herein, the claim amendments are supported throughout the Specification and no new matter has been introduced by the amendments.

I. Applicants' Invention

It may be useful to reiterate certain aspects of Applicants' invention prior to addressing the cited reference. One embodiment of the invention, typified by Claim 1, is a method for exposing transaction status in a supply chain formed by disparate trading partner systems. The method can include electronically receiving, in a trading partner exchange, an order from a first trading partner system. The received order can be associated with a first trading partner system identifier, the order initiating a transaction.

The method can also include having the trading partner exchange automatically assign a unique transaction identifier to the transaction in response to receiving the order. Additionally, the method can include the trading partner exchange electronically

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receiving at least one activity notification from at least a second trading partner system. The at least one activity notification can be configured to indicate an action corresponding to the transaction and having a second trading partner system identifier, where the first and at least a second trading partner systems jointly define a transaction processing chain.

According to the method, the trading partner exchange can associate, or link, the unique transaction identifier with the first and at least a second trading partner system identifiers. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 5, line 6 - p. 6, line 2; p. 8, lines 7-14; and p. 10, line 13 - p.13, line 8.) By cross referencing the first and second trading partner system identifiers using the unique transaction identifier, a status of the transaction at a point in the transaction processing chain can be provided according to the method. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 8, lines 18-20; and p. 13, lines 9-16.) Additionally, the trading partner exchange can electronically report, at any logical point in the transaction processing chain, the status of the transaction. Status can be reported, according to the method, via an integrated access interface.

II. The Claims Define Over The Prior Art

As already noted, each of the claims was rejected as being unpatentable over Sharp. Sharp is directed to a computer system and method that allows manufacturers and distributors of "brand products" to participate in e-commerce without violating existing distribution channels. (Col. 1, lines 50-54; see also Abstract.) Operationally, customers using the Sharp system and method place orders for brand name products over a data communications network, and the orders are allocated to manufacturers, distributors, and retailers according to "distribution channel protocols *defined by the manufacturers.*" (Col. 1, lines 54-59.) (emphasis supplied.)

Accordingly, all participants in the Sharp system and according to Sharp's method use a single, commonly defined system: one based on distribution channels defined by

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particular manufacturers. In contrast to Applicants' invention, Sharp explicitly rules out a supply chain defined by *disparate* systems. This fundamental difference precludes Sharp's providing any teaching or suggestion of Applicants' invention. Indeed, Sharp's reliance on channels defined by a common, manufacturer-defined protocol represents a teaching away from Applicants' invention.

With Applicants' invention, an entire transaction processing chain is formed from disparate systems. Applicants' invention obviates the need to modify existing systems used by either consumers or trading partners. Sharp requires all participants to modify their systems to accord with manufacturer-defined protocols.

This fundamental difference precludes Sharp's teaching or suggesting the features recited in independent Claims 1 and 4. Sharp, for example, nowhere teaches or suggests a central or trading partner exchange that for a particular transaction associates, or links, a unique transaction identifier with different trading partner system identifiers, the identifiers corresponding to disparate trading partner systems forming a transaction processing chain.

Indeed, there is no need with Sharp to associate or link a unique transaction identifier with different trading partner system identifiers because in Sharp every entity participates in a common system, the one built on the manufacturer-defined protocol. This is underscored by the fact that at each stage in Sharp, only one identifier is used, namely, "an order ID." Initially, with Sharp, a customer enters "order information" and then confirms the information. (Col. 3, line 61 Col. 4, line 2.) The order is then "allocated to a supplier according to a . . . protocol specified by the manufacturer. (Col. 4, lines 12-14.) (emphasis supplied.) Order processing proceeds according to a "fulfillment protocol supplied by the manufacturer. (Col. 5, lines 23-25.) (emphasis supplied.)

At each stage in processing an order, the same simple identifier is used: the order ID. When a human operator allocates an order to a supplier, the operator is presented

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with a web page display containing the order ID. (Col. 6, lines 1-55.) To search for information pertaining to a specific order, an operator enters the order ID in an order ID field. (Col. 7, lines 23-55.) When a product is shipped, tracking proceeds, again, with reference to the order ID. (FIG. 16, element 602.) At each stage, the single common parameter is the order ID. (See FIGs. 10-16.)

Sharp's reliance on both a common system, based on the manufacturer-defined protocol, and a single reference parameter, the order ID, precludes any need for associating or linking a unique transaction identifier with different trading partner system identifiers. Not surprisingly, Sharp neither teaches nor suggests any such associating or linking of a unique transaction identifier with different trading partner system identifiers, as recited in each of the independent claims.

It follows that participants in Sharp's supply chain can not use disparate systems. Accordingly, Sharp does not teach or suggest anything regarding a transaction processing chain comprising disparate trading partner systems, as also recited in each of the independent claims. Sharp's lack of any teaching or suggestion of associating, or linking, a unique transaction identifier with different trading partner system identifiers further precludes any teaching or suggestion of cross referencing different trading partner system identifiers using a unique transaction identifier. Therefore, Sharp does not teach or suggest providing a status of the transaction at a point in the transaction processing chain by cross referencing the first and second trading partner system identifiers using the unique transaction identifier.

Accordingly, Sharp fails to teach or suggest every feature recited in each of the independent claims. Applicants respectfully maintain, therefore, that independent Claims 1 and 4 both define over the prior art. Applicants further respectfully maintain that dependent Claims 2, 3, and 11-19, which each depend from one of the independent claims while reciting additional features, likewise define over the prior art.

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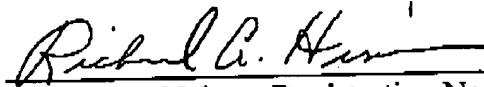
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CONCLUSION

Applicants believe that this Application is now in full condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested. The Applicants request that the Examiner call the undersigned if clarification is needed on any matter within this response, or if the Examiner believes a telephone interview would expedite the prosecution of the subject application to completion.

Respectfully submitted,

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